

GROUND COVER

News and Solutions from the Ground Up

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Look at me, I am your mirror!



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

Lady, an unhoused woman from New York City, slowly climbs the stairs to the Rackham Auditorium stage, careful not to trip on her burlap shawl. She tells the audience that Sarah Jones, the headliner at the afternoon's Martin Luther King Day program, will be along directly. Meantime, she recalls Dr. King's dream of equality, how diversity and justice go hand in hand, and reminds us that that includes economic justice.

She tells the academic audience that she, too, has a Ph.D. Hers stands for Poor, Houseless and Disabled. "I've got everything you've got, except tenure," she quips.

Lady knows who she is and has a home in her heart. Having no place to keep a bed makes her houseless, not homeless. According to Lady, the folks pitting us against each other might own many houses, but they know no true home. She recounts how she asks the drivers

of the cars that pull up to her corner for change. Oftentimes, the driver is too busy looking in the rear-view mirror to acknowledge her: a fact that angers Lady. "You look at me!" she demands. "I am your mirror."

Lady was the first of many ethnic characters brought warmly to life by playwright and performer Sarah Jones. Each showcased their stereotypical foibles and the prejudices they encounter in their lives. Jones' love for her many personas was so evident that the stereotyping of their views and mannerisms was not offensive. Jones revealed in the Question and Answer segment that she has great empathy for her characters, particularly as many of them are derived from her own diverse family.

In our downtown Ann Arbor community we have a store owner who has shown that same kind of empathy for his customers, and he is being evicted for it. Nabel Gneyl's Tower Mini Market offers a wide selection of groceries, supplies and prepared foods in its location at the corner of William and Maynard, conveniently located for both the University of Michigan campus and Ann Arbor's business district. His diverse clientele includes many of the city's economically challenged residents. Nabel is well-known among them as an ally who will help them out in a variety of ways, from providing employment to helping them succeed in their own enterprises, and greet them with the same warmth he shows all his customers.

Other local business owners appreciate the Mini Market. Fellow downtown

businesswoman Beth Trujillo comments, "I shop here to support a fellow business owner. It's been convenient and always very friendly. He supports me at Campus Barber."

However, the current leadership of the Tower Condominium Association has castigated the Mini Market clientele as undesirable. The Mini Market's wide mix of customers includes many men of Middle Eastern descent, and comments attributed to the board indicate some xenophobia may be at play, as well. (Nabel hails from Jordan, attended Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, and loves this country, of which his children are natural-born citizens.)

A recent incident has led to Nabel's impending eviction. A couple of months ago, one of Nabel's customers illicitly exited through his back door and urinated in the passageway that leads to the condominium lobby. The Tower Condominium Owners Association called for his immediate eviction, claiming the incident violated the association's bylaws and that the Mini Market was attracting an undesirable element. The situation is complicated: that unlocked back door has been forced upon Nabel by the Association and by fire department regulations.

Nabel says the association told him, "You are attracting a lot of homeless people."

He responded, "For God's sake, am I attracting people or homeless people? How do I know if they are homeless? Should I not take their money?"

At one point during her MLK Day

performance, Sarah Jones portrayed a Jordanian woman, who reminded the audience that "your lot is tied to my lot." Will the Ann Arbor community deny the economically marginalized people among us even a place to shop? As another of Sarah Jones' characters pointed out, class distinctions between "Haves" and "Have-nots" are present in every society, but we have now moved into a state of "Have you lost your mind? That you have so much while others have nothing."

Perhaps residents will persuade The Tower Condominium Association to re-examine the action they have taken against the Tower Mini-Market and allow it to remain of service to the entire downtown and campus communities.

On Another Note

Any individual who has lost their food stamp benefits because of the value of their only car should contact their caseworker. The existing asset test was eliminated after DHS workers informed policymakers that reliable transportation is essential for people to get back to work and keep their jobs.

Families who reach the four-year lifetime limit on TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits can get up to three months of housing assistance payment for the three months immediately following termination of cash assistance. To qualify, recipients must provide evidence that they visited Michigan Works to look for work each week of the month. Talk to a DHS caseworker about applying for this state assistance.

GROUNDCOVER NEWS MISSION:

Groundcover News exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Letter to the Editor Business Values Continue to Warp American Politics

Editor,

Ever since the Reagan era, our political and economic systems have become ever more business-friendly. Such things as routine background checks, union-bashing, voter ID rules, and greatly increased mortgage foreclosures are now much more common. State governments also compete to be more business-friendly with new venture tax breaks and "Right to Work" laws. The net result is a slow erosion of personal freedoms. Our forebears in the '20s and '30s did not cave in to these pressures, and to do so now is setting bad precedents for America's future.

Sincerely,
Paul Lambert
Ann Arbor

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Unused snowshoes just a part of life's unpredictability



by Rev. Dr.
Martha
Brunell, Pastor,
Bethlehem
United Church
of Christ

When I was a little girl, I learned to ice skate on the ponds of upstate New York. As young teenagers, my best friend and I took up downhill skiing. I was a decent skier; she became one of the leading women ski instructors in the country. Next a college student in Vermont, I fell in love with snowshoeing. One of the most peaceful experiences I knew was to snowshoe on a moonlit night across a field of fresh snow. My life went on. I grew up and lived many years in Saint Louis where winters are generally short, warm, and filled with little snow. I ice

skated occasionally but never went skiing or snowshoeing. Then I moved back north, first to the Illinois prairie and then to Michigan. I returned to real winter, a season I love. I started thinking about snowshoeing again.

Finally, last November I bought a pair of snowshoes on sale. They are much sleeker and lighter than the ones I used forty years ago. I was so excited to get out on the snow. Two months later those snowshoes bounce from the trunk of my car to the backseat depending on what else I am carrying that day. They are still bound together with store tape and cardboard. After a record-breaking wet 2011, the winter of 2012 has been remarkably dry. There haven't been moonlit nights with lots of fresh snow.

You and I make all sorts of plans for what lies ahead. We prepare for the pleasures and the responsibilities we anticipate meeting. We get ready, but life doesn't always offer up what we think it will. So much can change with little notice. Shifts in jobs, homes, relationships, weather, health, and basic well being are continual and often overwhelming.

My unused snowshoes are a tiny reminder of how unpredictable life can be. In the middle of all that, what can we give one another?

There is a cultural tendency during February to go overboard in attention toward romantic, coupled love. If we broaden our focus, February can be a time to celebrate the

love and care all sorts of people share with each other. I recently reread these words about loving care by Irish writer John O'Donohue:

"One of the most beautiful gifts in the world is the gift of encouragement. When someone encourages you that person helps you over a threshold you might otherwise never have crossed on your own. There are times of great uncertainty in every life. Left alone at such a time, you feel dishevelment and confusion like gravity. Then a friend comes with words of encouragement, a light and lightness visit you and you begin to find the stairs and the door out of the dark."

In the Groundcover community of writers, readers, vendors, advertisers, and supporters, we have rich opportunities

to encourage one another in what we do and say. There may be many unused snowshoes in our lives – in the form of disappointments, plans gone haywire, unexpected troubles, and hard times that take our breath away. Facing all that, we have one another and we have a precious common cause.

In everything, we can be encouragement as we lighten one another's load and bear loving light into dark days. With each other, we cross new thresholds.

My snowshoes may still be on the backseat as winter blends into spring. Whether they are or not, occasions for us to grow in extending encouragement will abound. That is a gift every bit as treasured as moonlight nights on the snow.

Will Ann Arbor ever get a skateboard park?

by Brett Bauder
Groundcover Contributor

Is there really going to be a skatepark built in Ann Arbor? I know we have all seen the stickers, t-shirts, etc. proclaiming "Support the Ann Arbor Skatepark," and have been told it's going to happen, but honestly I don't see any progress.

I am an old school skateboarder and long-time Ann Arbor local, and I want a skatepark more than anyone. In fact, I went to the city hall to show my support when Mayor Hieftje put the project up for consideration. He said the project was approved and the City would start to work on it. Now years have passed and there are no signs of progress. Sure, there is a website (A2skatepark.org) and a group that raises money for the park, but I want to see action. That means cement being poured, the ground being shaped, and so on. No one can tell you when the park is going to be built; they just say we need more money.

There have been many fundraisers for the skatepark, and my question is: what happened to the money? I have personally donated money to support the park. You can make your own speculations about where the money has gone.

It is now 2012, and though there has been talk about this park being built for years, if you go to the proposed site (the northwest corner of Veterans' Memorial Park, at the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Maple Road) there

are no indications of construction on a skatepark, not even a little sign that says "home of the future Ann Arbor Skatepark." In fact, there is nothing there but grass and trees. If I want to skate in a legal skatepark, I am forced to drive to the nearest skateparks that do exist, such as Riley Park in Farmington and Modern Skate & Surf in Royal Oak. Why do I still have to drive? We want a local park in Ann Arbor. It's now winter, so really construction will have to wait until spring. I'm concerned it will be the same song and dance when spring arrives – *Oh, we need more money* – and the cycle will continue.

In my opinion much of this delay has to do with the fact that most residents of Ann Arbor really don't care about the City getting a skatepark. They don't like skateboarding and also the reputation of skateboarders in general is poor. So it makes sense that the City puts money into other projects. But that leaves the skateboard community out in the cold, and we are forced to skate in illegal areas or travel to a skatepark in another town.

Of course, the third choice is to try and change things ourselves. I think that a critical mass skate session may get some attention, but ticking people off really is not the answer either.

As an Ann Arbor skateboarder, I have hope for this project, but right now I am really discouraged and think that other many other skaters feel the same way.

Embracing change the New Year brings

by La Shawn Courtwright
Groundcover Vendor

The New Year to me is a continuation of life's cycle, striving to complete goals and embark upon the new. Time goes on, and so must we.

Another year of seasons, beginning with the winter season. The time of year when it's cold. The spring representing coming out from the cold and beginning to bud. The summer is fair enough for thriving, and the mild autumn days are calm and serene. Then comes the initiation of things anew, and things will come and go again.

The icy reality is that, things don't always manifest the way we plan them or assume on occasion, yet, they can and do happen. So many times I have said to myself, "not again" or "why me?" Well, as we go on in spite of the curves that slow us down, we begin to see that, if we had not endured those delays, we would not have arrived right on time. Don't get discouraged by everything that comes up, but, always set your standards high and accept your victories, both big and small. The world is not that cold of a place when I look at it like this.

Then, things become more visible. We can see a clearer picture as things reveal themselves to us. What

begins to come out is our creativeness; building our ability to grow financially, physically, mentally, and emotionally. When we are in a good place, our plans and goals take root. Things begin to blow over that once held us back; we are ready and able to move forward. Progress is well at hand.

We have warmed up to the idea of the stability that we have established, our foundations are taking form. It is time to cultivate our plans and implement the tasks necessary to reach our goals. So I gather a mental consensus, see my progress, and do away with my shortcomings. This is a continual process. We all can use some time to weed-out the tangles. The true labor to meet our objectives bears the fruits of our success.

I can relax at the completion of a project that I've worked diligently toward. The reward is a sense of accomplishment for me, being a person who has often let procrastination or reluctance stagnate significant self-potential, puts my mind at peace. I think, "What's next?" I start on something else. Life is full of possibilities, so with this in mind, many things are possible. Never be afraid to make a fresh start, or continue doing what you set out to do. The time has come to move forward. Happy New Year all.

Three teens living on the streets discuss their plight

by Shelley
Groundcover Vendor

As I write this story about the three teens I recently met who live out on the streets, I thank my Higher Power that my child isn't in that situation. I feel that I'm really close to being in that spot. I have a 15-year-old and he is my pride and joy. He has grown up with a lot of crap that no kid or anybody, for that matter, should be subjected to. He has a strong sense of reality and understands things that most kids his age wouldn't. Our family deals with alcoholism, anxiety, bipolar depression, ADHD, possible manic depression and anger issues. Only one person is dealing with their issues utilizing Alanon and has taken medicine for the depression and anger issues. As a result of all these disorders, we have experienced more than our share of plights which led to making poor decisions, alcohol abuse, co-dependency and fear, just to name a few.

I see these teens struggling with the very same issues. They have suffered more than I can imagine. They have adapted to this way of life. My sense is that they would like to be in a situation where they can be fine, upstanding citizens with the comforts of a loving home. Someone or something has steered them in the wrong direction. What could possibly have turned them to such hardships? Without using their real names, they are: Shania, 17, Tracie, 15 and Will, 19.

Tracie was the first person to speak up and answer my question, "Why are you out on the streets?" She began to tell me that her parents don't care. Tracie grew up in a blended family. Her parents have had it with her, she says. She explained that after several attempts at rehab and being in mental institutions, her parents decided they didn't want to help her anymore. They gave up. Through her attempts at getting sober, Tracie did find out that she had been diagnosed with bipolar depression, ADHD and anxiety. Tracie has attempted suicide by slitting her wrists. She communicates with her brother via a cell phone that is on her parent's phone plan. Tracie still hasn't found sobriety. She has a friend who she feels is more like her sister. They've known each other for about eight years now. Her friend's name is Shania.

Shania is 17 and pregnant. Her baby is due in April. Shania was kicked out because she became pregnant. Tracie plans on helping Shania with taking care of the baby once the baby is

born. They do have a home to stay in upon occasion because Tracie said the mother of another friend respects them and lets them in. Sometimes Tracie and Shania have slept in alleyways and the elevators of parking garages. They say that the elevators are the warmest place to be on cold nights.

Will has been out on the streets for the last four years. Both of his parents are deceased. His adoptive mother died of cancer and his father had a heart attack. He is originally from the thumb area of Michigan. Will has stayed in the woods, elevators and alleys. He couch surfs here and there. Will is working now to get his GED and is looking at options to better himself.

Will, Tracie and Shania get money by panhandling, though Shania says she really doesn't like doing that. Shania and Tracie both smoke, so they ask people for cigarettes. They eat meals at the Delonis Center or other places they can get free food.

I am sure these teens have told me only the surface stuff, but isn't it enough to curl your hair? Or scare it straight? We need more money to pay for more professionals (I am sure there are plenty of people out there with degrees in social work looking for jobs) to help guide these teens to reach their true potential. Parents are a key part in helping guide their children as well. But what can a parent do when they feel they have exhausted their time and money to help their teen?

I have learned about various agencies that help teens and their families. The Education Project For Homeless Youth (EPFHY) is a program of the Washtenaw Intermediate School

District (WISD). This program works to ensure that students who are homeless or in temporary living situations are enrolled, regularly attend and succeed in school. All the school districts in Washtenaw County are working with students living in temporary living situations, though Ypsilanti has the highest percentage of housing-insecure students. The EPFHY works closely with the county shelters, serves families who are living in motels or bouncing from family member to family member, and even helps kids in foster care placements.

A large portion of the budget for EPFHY is federally funded through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The Act guarantees that students who are homeless have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to others. State contributions to EPFHY have been cut by 30 percent as of October 2011. EPFHY has relied on donations this year to make up for the shortfall. EPFHY also relies on private donations and grants to meet the various needs of students.

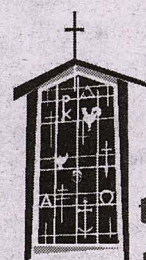
According to program manager Peri Stone-Palmquist, they have served 800 youngsters already this school year. Stone-Palmquist says that when children are suddenly uprooted from their homes, they will sometimes move in with another family. The teen struggles to do their schoolwork because of many distractions from being crammed into another household with other kids. The kids end up staying up late and

not getting proper rest. They also worry over where they will be sleeping that night and whether they will get dinner that evening. Distracted, they fall into crisis mode: school is hard, they lack proper clothing and their basic needs aren't being met. Sometimes there is the problem of substance abuse on the part of the youth, the parent, or both. Stone-Palmquist feels we need more case managers to monitor class attendance of teens and help them get the resources they need. She says that the best advice is to be emotionally available for youth who struggle and keep youth in the same school all year. When a child changes schools they end up falling four to six months behind.

Ozone House Clinical director Karen Boyce says youth homelessness is a growing issue. An abrupt transfer to the class, called the "new homeless," occurs when a family is doing well until a parent becomes unemployed and the household is turned upside down economically and emotionally.

Boyce sees teens missing school to stay home and take care of sick siblings or grandparents, witnessing repeated trauma or violence at home, being raised in poverty, having to make difficult choices, and not knowing where to go for help. Sometimes, the youth resort to criminal acts. According to Boyce, Ozone House clients today

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Housing insecurity among teens and young adults

by Susan Beckett
Publisher

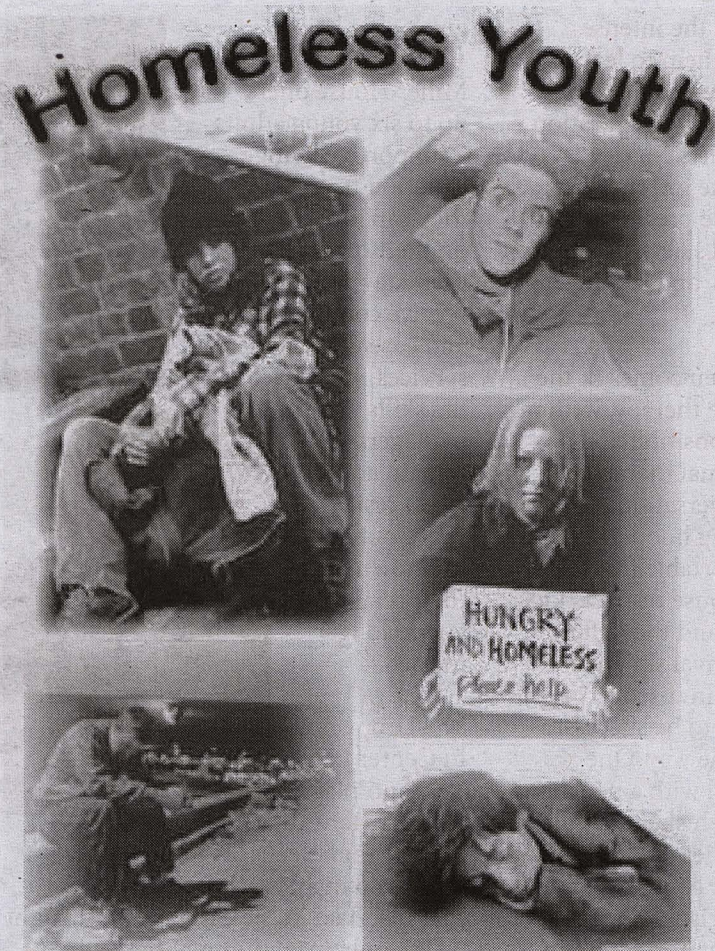
Homelessness is rising fastest in the U.S. among teens and young adults. The poor economy and the difficulty young adults have finding stable employment account for part of the rise. Strapped families who have been forced into cramped apartments, hotel rooms or temporary living situations with friends or relatives are increasingly telling their 18-year olds that they will now have to fend for themselves. Sometimes teens feel unwelcome when a parent takes on a new partner and leave of their own volition. Sometimes they are escaping abuse. Some 21 to 55 percent have aged out of the foster care system or been released from an institutional setting.

Tensions among teens and parents are nothing new, as struggles to separate turn into power struggles and confrontation at every turn. For already stressed families, normal rebellion turns into the last straw. Families doubled up with others sometimes have to choose between leaving the only shelter they can find and removing the source of stress – their teenage child. According to one estimate, 15 percent of children will be homeless at least once before they turn 18.

Emerging sexuality provokes separation between some parents and their older children. Provocations range from being sexually active to taking on a non-heterosexual identity. Unwanted pregnancies and the way the teen opts to deal with it can also result in the teen being forced from the household. According to a paper published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48 percent of street youth and 33 percent of shelter youth have been pregnant or impregnated someone, as compared to 10 percent of house youth. (Homeless teens who are pregnant or new mothers can find shelter with supportive services at Catholic Social Services' Father Patrick Jackson House in downtown Ann Arbor.)

It is not easy to recognize a homeless teen. They work hard at blending in and are often successful at it. Kids sleeping over at friends' houses is normal, many appear a little scruffy, and adults accept some alienation as common among teens. In a university environment, there are many public spaces where teens can hang out without attracting undue attention.

In part because of their lack of visibility, there are few shelter options for teens under 18 and only one general supportive housing option reserved for older teens in our community. Struggle



as they might for independence, teens and young adults are very social and crave family support. They return to abusive or neglectful parents. In the absence of a traditional family, they find others to fill those roles in their lives.

Teens often band together and look out for each other. They sometimes adopt family roles, referring to a companion 'my Auntie' or addressing another as 'Sis'. Occasionally they assign a friend a parental role, particularly when they have been rejected by their birth parents and need a supportive parental figure to help them work through their issues. Many find an adult, someone outside the school system, who they admire for their lifestyle who they rely on for advice.

The academic consequences of housing instability are staggering. Between 25 and 35 percent of homeless youth report that they had to repeat at least one grade. National law mandates that school districts provide transportation and continued enrollment so children can stay in their home school while the family's living situation is unstable; but the uncertainty over where they will sleep that night and the anxiety over hiding their situation from peers utilizes a good deal of the mental and emotional resources that could be applied to learning. They often camouflage academic struggles with unacceptable behaviors.

"Imagine if you lived at three or

four different addresses, staying with other people, never having your own room, needing someone to talk to," posed Azibo Stevens, the Ann Arbor Public School District liaison for homeless youth, who helps connect youth to resources and helps parents be more involved in helping their kids.

Stevens sat with one young man in such circumstances and the boy burst into tears, exclaiming, "I'm just so tired. I'm sleeping in the living room and

the TV is always on."

Stevens said, "He just threw in the towel. I tried to get Mom to move them into a family shelter but she adamantly refused. She viewed living in a shelter as the ultimate failure."

According to Stevens, youth cope in various ways but most are in denial of their situation. They minimize shortcomings so they don't have to think about their problems. They also struggle with identity, especially the older high school students. He sees that a majority of the youth have a fairly positive attitude despite their disadvantages. Stevens thinks if we can get past the defense mechanisms that the youth use to cover up the reality of the situation, the kids will become more enlightened as to what they need to do to better themselves despite their situation. Stevens said that a team of professionals would be a tremendous help in engaging the youth to become more in tune with themselves so they can accomplish what needs to be done to succeed.

Other struggles faced by youths living doubled-up or in a car include being teased about their body odor, as they have difficulty getting a shower and wear old clothes. If they live in a shelter, they refuse to be bused there or pretend to be volunteers so peers will not know they are homeless. Some use alcohol or marijuana to help them cope, but that is not generally the case. Many

are obsessed with making money and getting their families back in a home. The attention of a caring adult can make a world of difference for kids in these circumstances as they struggle to process their situations and understand what is normal. Stevens recalls mentoring a high school student for one hour a week on Fridays. He was unsure whether he was making an impact, especially since the boy was so reluctant to go with him during the first several weeks. Then the teacher confided that the boy only attended school about 30 percent of the time and would frequently be absent Monday through Thursday, but he always came to school on Friday.

Stevens notes Ypsilanti and Willow Run offer the exemplary Gear Up program in which mentors stay with students from middle school through high school graduation. The program, whose federal funding grant runs out this year, provides impoverished and academically struggling students with after-school tutoring, college visits, the promise of college scholarships, weekend and summer programs along with consistent mentoring, with the goal of having these youths enter and succeed in college. Stevens sees the infusion of caring adults who help with homework in an accessible setting conducive to studying as key to future success.

Many other community programs offer counseling and mentoring services, but since they are not offered at the school, transportation becomes a barrier. Stevens has a 20-hour per week position and has about 210 children on his caseload, ranging from pre-school through high school. He helps transport families to school meetings and link them with services but has no time to do outreach and little time for individual meetings.

The Education Project for Homeless Youth serves housing insecure school aged youths in Washtenaw County, helping them maintain continuity in a single school through the numerous moves that are common when a family loses its primary residence. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, part of No Child Left Behind, mandates that local school districts provide the necessary transportation and resources for children to maintain continuity in school even while their living situation is in turmoil.

As we reach the halfway point of this school year, the Education Project is already serving 800 children, of whom 145 are teens living without a parent.

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Teens turn to Ozone House to feel safe and connected

by Susan Beckett
Publisher

Teens in trouble have been turning to Ozone House for the last 30 years. Offerings evolved to include family counseling as well as temporary and transitional housing programs. Approximately 160 to 240 teens find their way to Ozone House each year, some for a few weeks to work through a crisis and some for a few years as they chart a new path for their lives.

Teen-acting-out crosses all socioeconomic lines, according to Ozone House clinical director Karen Boyce, though she attributes some of the motivation in stable households to thrill seeking. Survival underlies the acting out of the majority of those seeking refuge at Ozone House. "They are very much overrepresented by kids who grew up on assistance or in low-income housing," says Boyce. Moving frequently with episodes of housing insecurity is part of their reality. Many are unaware of the Education Project which helps displaced youth get to school and participate fully, and get stressed and fall behind in school. Doubling up or staying with friends or relatives poses difficulties for teens struggling for independence.

"They've been raised with episodes of homelessness and trauma... that's all they know. How could I expect them not to be struggling with homelessness themselves?" mused Boyce.

Boyce has noticed an increase in the seriousness and repeated trauma in homeless episodes of the families now coming to Ozone House, especially among the "new homeless," who a few years ago could never have imagined themselves in their current circumstances. In her 17 years working there, things have gone from "There are generally enough services" to "Wow, these kids have been failed by the system and every family member they have encountered." Community and home lives have become increasingly violent, with calm and stability rare commodities, according to Boyce. Without a stable place to sleep at night, cell phones become a necessity for teens who go through their contacts looking for a place to crash. Many also use their cell phones to access the internet and complete school assignments. Ozone House recently added a computer lab for the use of the teens in its Safe Stay program.

The Safe Stay program, housed in Ozone's Washtenaw Road headquarters, is a short term residential shelter for 10- to 17-year-olds. During their two to three week stay, up to six residents receive individual and perhaps family

counseling to address the intense conflicts that caused them to leave home, coping skills training, group counseling, and life skills preparation. Staff and outside experts coach residents on topics like internet safety, substance abuse prevention, youth legal rights and safety, cooking, communication skills, and setting boundaries and goals.

Group counseling often comes in the form of art, adventure therapy, written or spoken word composition and performance. Individual therapy is likely to be done conversationally on a walk or while shooting hoops, if that setting is more comfortable for the teen. The staff at Ozone House respects kids for what they know (and they often have remarkable survival skills) and tries to engage youth in discovering what more they need to be successful in a socially acceptable way. One young woman arrived with a penchant for braiding hair which she often did for roommates and friends. The staff helped her realize she could become a licensed cosmetologist and make a career of this. They supported her in completing her GED and becoming comfortable conversing with people. She eventually graduated from the Aveda Institute, rented space in a salon, and built up her clientele to the point where she and a partner opened their own salon.

The age population they work with, 10- to 20-year-olds, often blend in with their peers, even though they don't know where they will be sleeping that night.

"You don't see kids as homeless the way you do with adults," noted Boyce. "Those kids panhandling in the Diag are just as likely to be local kids just looking for extra spending money."

They emphasize the importance of feeling safe, connected and accepted and have special programs for teens whose sexual identity makes them especially vulnerable to rejection. All youth can build their self-esteem and give back to the community through the Youth Making Impact program.

Among the homeless 18-year-olds showing up on their doorstep are kids who have aged out of the foster care system. Others are kids whose own struggling families tell them they can no longer afford them and they will have to fend for themselves. These are the same kids who missed school so they could care for sick younger siblings or an aging grandparent so their parents would not have to miss work. They often had part-time jobs and contributed to the family. They are drawn to returning to their family to

give or get help.

Miller House offers up to six young adults a supportive living situation from which they can move to living on their own. During their stay residents receive counseling and case management services, and develop life skills. Case managers remain active when residents move out on their own, until their services are no longer needed.

The Drop-in Center in Ypsilanti plays an important role for these teens, as well as others who drop in after school. The hot meal that is served in the early evening might be the only meal they get that day. The computers allow them to finish schoolwork and pursue employment

opportunities and the counselors offer them some positive adult interactions and solutions to some of the problems they are struggling with, like how to get to school, get a job, get a library card or enroll in Medicaid. They have an

see CAMP, page 11



Above: Ozone House Drop-In Peer Outreach Workers Ebony Meades and Wyattte Von D. **Left:** Cedric Charles-Hatter preparing for the March 10 Community Showcase benefit for the Ozone House Drop-In Center



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Scarves with a Purpose distribute warmth and hope

by Colleen Huysman
Groundcover Contributor

A new generation is knitting and this time for social justice. Melanie Hebeisen and University of Michigan's Scarves With A Purpose (SWAP) knit scarves to distribute to homeless shelters in Ann Arbor.

"Knitting scarves isn't going to solve the problem," Hebeisen, SWAP founder, said. "But, doing things now will make it better."

Scarves With A Purpose is an action team funded through the Michigan Community Scholars Program (MCSP) with an email list of 383 members. Students meet two hours weekly to knit or crochet scarves to distribute to local homeless shelters.

Hebeisen started knitting when she was in sixth grade. Her mom taught her how to knit just months after her grandmother, an avid knitter, passed away. They started making scarves as holiday gifts. Hebeisen and her mom wanted a reason to knit so they started SWAP and began teaching all of Hebeisen's friends in Northbrook, Ill. how to knit. Through middle and high school, they had a consistent group of about 40 who made thousands of scarves over the years. They then brought them to local homeless shelters and soup kitchens around Chicago.

"We realized that there were far more people out there who really needed a hug around the neck – the homeless. We thought we should knit some scarves for those who could use them in cold Chicago weather. And so it began," Hebeisen said.

When Hebeisen started as a freshman in 2009, she started SWAP at the University of Michigan. At the first meeting there were only six members, but the group has grown significantly

since. Last year, they had meetings with 100 students eager to learn how to knit and help out. They consistently have about 45 students meet and knit this year. Some people also just stop by to pick up supplies and knit on their own, according to Hebeisen.

Hebeisen hopes that by knitting scarves, students will learn more about homelessness.

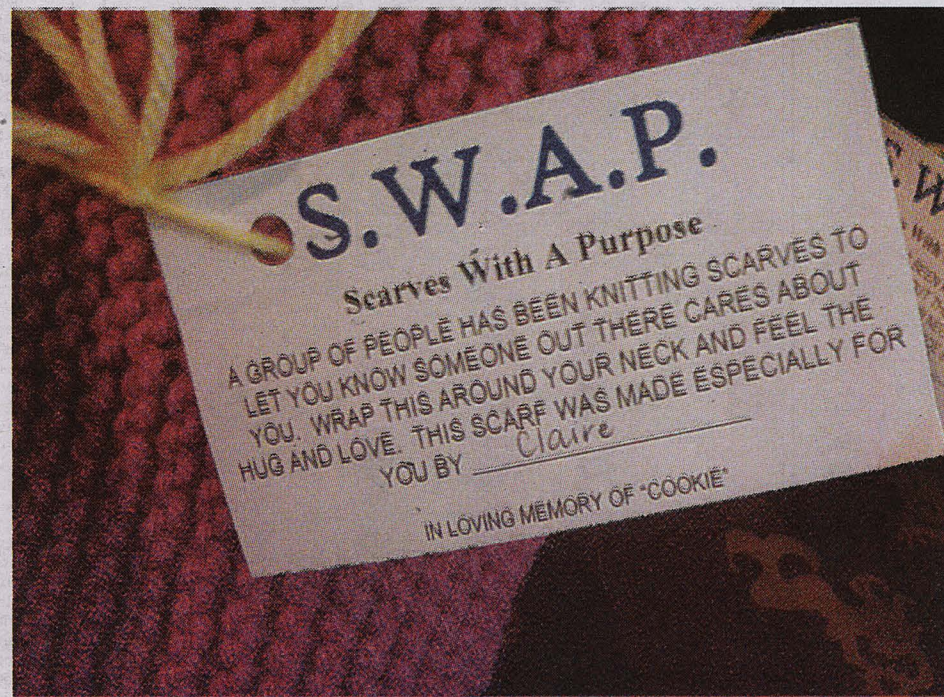
"The more people are aware, the more they do about it," Hebeisen said. She is a junior majoring in women's studies and sociology.

SWAP has over 200 scarves to distribute this year so far. Once scarves are made, they are wrapped up with string and a note from the knitter. Hebeisen said they hope to bring them to the Delonis Center, and some of the Alternative Spring Break trips through the Ginsburg Center will bring them to distribute on their trips in cold locations. Last year, SWAP did an event with residents at Glacier Hills to knit scarves and they also brought 195 scarves to the Tumin Center in Detroit.

"We're not just helping the homeless. We're helping students with de-stressing," Hebeisen said. She said since she has been at Michigan, she has knit about 50 scarves herself.

Sarah Washabaugh got involved with SWAP as a freshman through the Michigan Community Scholars Program (MCSP) and at the beginning of fall semester took over as SWAP President. As a sophomore in the College of Engineering from a small town just outside Lansing, Mich., she said she had never really seen homelessness before moving to Ann Arbor.

"SWAP is a way to learn about a cause greater than ourselves," Washabaugh



said. Washabaugh said some SWAP meetings have gone for five hours if people have the time just to knit and talk. As an action team through MCSP, SWAP works with Will Work for Food and other MCSP rural and urban poverty action teams on campus to address the root problem of why people need scarves: homelessness.

The MCSP, started in 1999, is a residential learning community that brings together students and faculty committed to community service, diversity and academic excellence to make a difference in local, national and

see KNITTERS, page 10

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Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

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— CIDEHI UIMFXEA

Solutions on page 11

GROUNDCOVER VENDOR CODE

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The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

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- Nineteenth century British painter
- Euphonium-like instrument
- Billiards shot
- Board game
- Type of exam
- Yucca
- Movie dog
- Government agency (abbr.)
- Ascended
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Check recipient
- Carpentry joint
- Illinois city
- Conceal
- John _____
- Neither
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Preserve
- Designating
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Any of several post-secondary schools (abbr.)
- Mayday!
- Metal
- Bifocals
- Chilled
- Well known
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Desilu co-founder
- Portable beds
- Enthusiasm
- Writing surface
- Fibrous plant
- Length measurements
- Green and MacFarlane
- The fifteenth
- Guard for the New York Giants

DOWN

- Head part
- Oregon river
- Deranged
- Annoyed
- John Wayne's daughter
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Hound
- Wing

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- Star of Gigi
- Khan of boxing fame
- Red
- Margarine
- Restaurant necessity
- Intensely
- This time
- String terminator (abbr.)
- Approve
- Stitching
- Bird
- Race car driver Milka
- Ova
- Actress Moore
- Actor Sharif
- Spain's longest river
- Empty

- The Knight Templar
- Luxury boat manufacturer (abbr.)
- Message seen on a candy heart
- Reverberated
- Longboat's need
- Seeps
- Claw
- Sidestep
- Slow-witted
- Fish
- Perry Mason's creator
- Insect
- Promise
- Snakes
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Puzzle by Jeff Richmond



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Teens form bonds to help one another at different support organizations

by Francesca Lupia
Groundcover Contributor

When firmly devoted to a common purpose, the passions and opinions of a group of people may cause great change. Building strong bonds of trust and understanding between diverse ages, classes, and social groups is a critical mission, and a strong and supportive community is especially vital for organizations that serve homeless youth. Many organizations use community as their goal and means of helping housing-insecure teens; this month, staff and participants from three such groups shared their insights on community, leadership, and support between homeless and high-risk youth.

Ozone House, a shelter and community center that has served greater Ann Arbor's homeless and high-risk teens since 1969, has built a strong reputation of commitment to creating a safe space for youth. Ozone House coordinates several programs, including emergency housing and counseling, but one of its most popular and community-oriented programs is Drop-In. Five days a week, the Drop-In Center in Ypsilanti provides "a supportive place where teens can be themselves."

Community and leadership are strongly represented in the very structure of Drop-In. "[Housing-insecure youth] don't always have opportunities to hang out in a youth-drive safe space," said Youth Development Director Colleen O'Brien. "We try to create a strong family."

O'Brien went on to explain the primary leadership organization within the Drop-In Center: the Street Outreach Team. In this program, interested teens pass through a week-long training institute to become Ozone House's ambassadors to high-risk youth. The five teens selected for the program then travel to youth events in the Ann Arbor area, offering information about the Ozone House. Peer Outreach Worker Cedric Charles-Hatter explained, "I've become much more aware of what other teens are going through."

Charles-Hatter's words show the significance of the Street Outreach Team: It works to promote leadership, forge interpersonal bonds, and expand teens' empathy for their community. Colleen O'Brien also noted that many Drop-In participants develop their own

ways to become active community members: "They might help write a song... we've had youth facilitate groups, step up at an open-mic night, and even help out in our kitchen. We really want to make [Drop-In] about expanding our family."

A close, supportive community is also fostered at the Neutral Zone, "Ann Arbor's Teen Center" since 1998. The Neutral Zone sponsors an open Drop-In center on weekday afternoons. Similar to Ozone House, Drop-In provides a safe space for teens, with computers, a kitchen, and homework help available. Rebecca Bowman, the Neutral Zone's Program Coordinator, calls Drop-In a "teen-friendly facility, all about helping teens explore opportunities." Though open to any interested youth, the Neutral Zone frequently serves as a safe space for homeless and low-income teens.

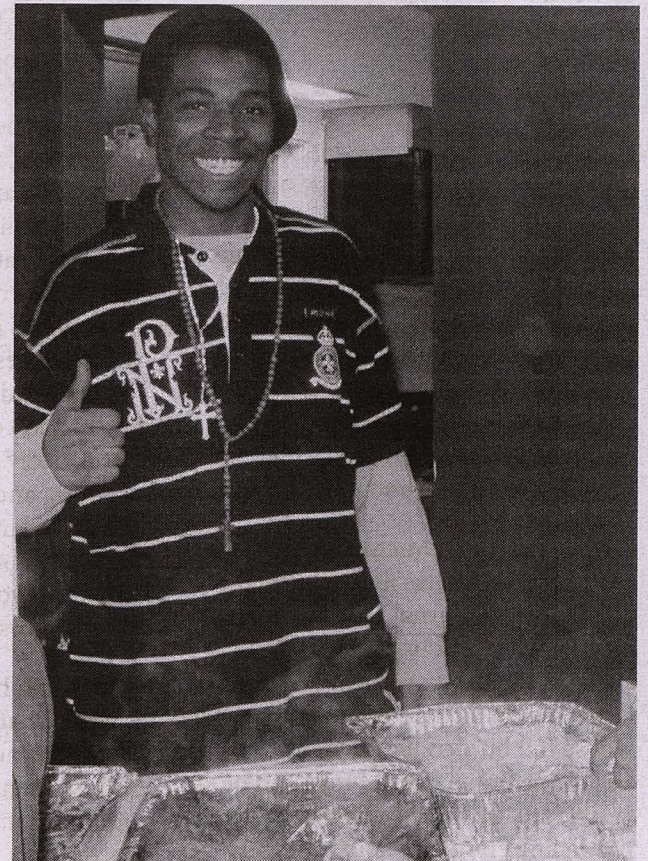
"Some [housing-insecure teens] are quicker than others to focus on building bonds with others," Bowman said. "A lot of teens come in with really deep problems."

Accordingly, the Neutral Zone's first priority when serving teens in crisis is individual security. Bowman explained that the Neutral Zone helps housing-insecure teens look into "long-term goals," which may include finding housing at Ozone House or applying for a Bridge Card. Once teens "feel comfortable" at the Neutral Zone, Bowman has seen many once-crisis-stricken teens "take on responsibility: they might facilitate programs, or even take on internships here at the Neutral Zone." In addition, many teens involved in Drop-In form strong, trusting relationships with fellow youth and staff. Echoing the Ozone House's concept of a "Drop-In family," Bowman smilingly added, "Some of the [teens] call me Mom, or Mama.

They come to Drop-In looking for mentorship and guidance... it really becomes a little-brother, little-sister situation."

A third organization, Community Records, may not be as well-known as Ozone House or the Neutral Zone. It is devoted to "building community through music," in the words of founder and Creative Operations Officer Jesse Morgan. Morgan is also the Youth Employment Coordinator at Ozone House. Community Records, which has recently found permanent housing at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Ypsilanti, offers free instruments and music classes for low-income teens, as well as songwriting workshops. The program has served over 2,500 youth, and has led to the production of over 60 original songs since 2006. Community Records, Morgan said, "compels teens to work together in a songwriting workshop. They really get to know each other, and are able to work together and make a statement." A sense of community is further strengthened with the mutual respect involved in "working-artist relationships" formed between youth and Community Records staff.

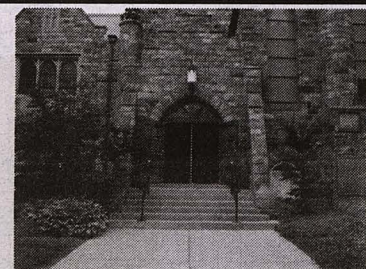
Ozone House, the Neutral Zone, and Community Records vary in



Eric, who earned his culinary arts certification through Food Gatherers' Community Kitchen, now makes and serves dinner at the Ozone House Drop-In Center, a place he used to visit after school.

services, but staff and volunteers from all three organizations have gained insights into the challenges and complexities of facilitating community among disadvantaged teens. Colleen O'Brien of Ozone House noted that many teens who come to Drop-In "haven't had their basic needs met. It's

see TEENS, page 11



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Acknowledging your stress is the first step to diminishing it

by Leonore Gerstein
Groundcover Contributor

How many times have you heard that stress is bad for you? And what's the point in all the reminders, since life in our crazy world makes stress unavoidable? You might wonder whether being stressed-out can really and truly lead to health problems. The overwhelming evidence suggests that the answer is, YES. A good deal of scientific research has been devoted to this topic and concluded that, unfortunately, there is a very concrete link between stress and illness.

The University of Michigan's School of Public Health has just published an issue of its journal *Findings* that explores this serious problem and suggests ways to cope with it. The writers warn us that "stress is an iceberg whose full burden lies hidden from view." The brain, heart, lungs and blood vessels are all directly affected by stress-producing emotional and physical tension. We are still learning about the ways in which our bodies translate stress into depression, hypertension, heart disease, influenza, and diabetes, and other conditions.

The *Findings* writers note that there are four kinds of stress: daily hassles (e.g., running late for work, long lines at the store), stressful life-events (e.g., unemployment, a new baby), lifetime trauma (e.g., war, natural disaster, loss of a child), and chronic strains (poverty and discrimination). As you reread the above categories, try to bring them "home" to your own case. Do you know what events and circumstances cause your toughest stress? Does your list include food and housing insecurity, loss of a job or chronic unemployment, loss of a key relationship or social network, and on the spiritual plane, a bad conscience or inability to forgive? These are common sources of acute stress, but your own profile may include other factors as well.

Where and how can stress damage us? It takes what may be its greatest toll on our immune system, which is our body's defense against viruses, bacteria, and many non-infectious diseases. Here is how the American Medical Association explains this process in its 'Complete Guide to Prevention and Wellness': "If you are constantly under pressure, the part of your brain that controls the stress response is going to

continually pump out stress hormones like cortisol. These hormones bathe the immune system's infection-fighting cells in a sea of instructions that tells them to stop fighting. This means that, when you are under constant stress, your immune system is less able to respond to a disease-causing invader like a bacterium or virus."

The authors go on to explain that risk factors for serious illnesses are worsened by chronic high stress. The most common risk factors, and also those likely to escalate when we are under constant stress, are: a rise in blood pressure and "bad" cholesterol, increased smoking, overeating and weight gain, and avoidance of physical activity. All of these can be controlled to some degree, but our success depends on our ability to manage stress. So, if you make a conscious effort to reduce stress you are more likely to avoid chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer, and flare-ups of ulcers, multiple sclerosis, arthritis and asthma.

Ignored stress has a way of getting worse. Don't be a tough-it-out hero. Get to know yourself; become familiar

with the signals your mind and your body are giving you (which could be a racing heartbeat, headaches, muscle aches, the inability to concentrate or remember things, increased anger or hopelessness). You may find this very challenging, especially if you feel you can only survive by blocking your awareness and pretending that the stress has vanished. After awareness comes action. Here are some things you can do: make sure you get plenty of sleep, including short naps; practice deep breathing; meditate; be selective about your time with the TV, computer, and radio; learn progressive relaxation and relaxation through visualization; hang out with supportive people; join a group; learn anger management; be active (walk, run, work out, swim...); do Tai Chi or yoga; laugh; pray and take part in your spiritual community; give to others. Some of these activities just take determination, while others, such as yoga, need to be learned, so do seek instruction and accept help.

And, last but not least: a professional psychologist or therapist can be a great ally as you journey toward a less stressful life.

Knitters raise awareness for homeless plight while providing warmth

continued from page 7

global communities. Students are proud that the group does not have to charge students any fees or dues and is still able to provide members with the necessary supplies to help those who are homeless.

"They're people. They need our help. Scarves are something easy we can do. You can help someone for the rest of their lives. It will keep them warm for quite a while," Washabaugh said.

Washabaugh knit her first potholder in second grade. She lost her skill over the years, but was retaught when she joined SWAP freshman year. This semester, she knit approximately 20 scarves. Now, she teaches others how to knit.

"It's great being able to help other people help the homeless by teaching them how to knit," Washabaugh said.

The scarves are well-received by members of the community.

"One just isn't enough. You need a few to keep the wind out," Tony, a Groundcover

News vendor said, wearing three scarves he had been given.

Hebeisen said she once recognized one of the scarves she had made on someone in Chicago. She is still waiting for this to happen in Ann Arbor.

If you would like to get a scarf or learn more about Scarves With A Purpose,

please feel free to contact Sarah Washabaugh at: washaes@umich.edu



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Teens grow and bond with community-building programs

continued from page 9

hard to really reach out if you're hungry, or if you don't have a place to stay, or if you feel unsafe."

Jochabed, an intern at Ozone House, added, "[Housing-insecure teens] tend to stay quiet for a while. If it feels safe, they'll step up." Bowman of the Neutral Zone agreed, mentioning that it sometimes takes more than a year for teens to "let loose the trauma they've experienced."

Stigma towards homeless individuals also affects community-building efforts among teens in crisis. Peer Outreach Worker Cedric Charles-Hatter has been "shut down" several times during his work with Ozone House. "People are worried that they'll be judged [for their

housing situation]," he added.

Workers and participants from all three organizations, though, were united in their awe and optimism at the potential of disadvantaged youth to form close-knit communities, in which they play an active and responsible part. Jesse Morgan of Community Records frequently sees people of diverse backgrounds forming connections with each other through music, and Bowman described 180-degree turns in the behavior of crisis-stricken youth, from shy and reserved to outgoing and ready to lead. But the clearest and most inspiring perspective on youth community-building can be found in the words of youth themselves, and Ozone House's Street Outreach team had no shortage of insight on the trust they help to build. "We can

bring different people together and communicate, on some level, with them," said team member Demoni Donald McIntyre. Wyatte, another member of the team, added, "I've learned that youth have a powerful voice. All they need is a push to get out."

The small group of teens have learned from and been inspired by Drop-In participants, and in every step of the interview process and their tenure as Peer Outreach Workers, they have been devoted to that common purpose of community that has helped foster so much change, trust, and personal growth.

"We're here to make a better way to help young people," said team member Eric Streeter. "If I can make a difference, if it can be better, I'm willing to help."

Show troubled teens you care with a smile

continued from page 4

are, "very much overrepresented by kids who grew up in families who received assistance, lived in Section 8 housing or were low-income."

Be M Cee is a Peer Outreach Worker employed by the Drop-in Center to help bring kids in and supervise activities. Be M Cee related that youth often struggle with a lack of food and basic necessities, clothing, especially clean clothing, transportation, social barriers (not being able to communicate well with others), drug and alcohol abuse and lack of stable home life.

You see some of the commonalities in the struggles of homeless teens. It is necessary to pitch in and guide these youths away from lifestyles likely to bring them self-disrespect, neglect, stigma, turmoil and Lord knows what else. I hope Tracie, Shania and Will find the help they need to get their lives back on track. When you see a troubled youth, show them you care, even by just saying hello or nodding to acknowledge their presence.

Ozone House and the Education Project for Homeless Youth could use your help with donations of new clothing and holiday gifts, volunteering your time and monetary donations.

Contact:

Education Project for Homeless Youth (EPHY) — Email: pstone@wash.k12.mi.us Phone: 734-994-8100, ext. 1518

Ozone House — 24-hour Crisis Line: 734-662-2222

Youth have options for finding help when homeless

continued from page 5

There were 206 such youths all of last school year. Some of these teens live with a non-guardian like an aunt or uncle, some live in their cars, couch surf with friends, or take refuge in the woods or elevators. While most are juniors and seniors in high school, some are only in middle school.

Education Project program manager Peri Stone-Palmquist echoes Stevens' sentiments about how to help the unmet needs of these kids.

"Beyond housing, I would love to see more case managers, people who can meet with them and monitor closely how they are doing in school and help them get a job. A caring adult who can help meet their complex needs," she said.

The Education Project staff helps as they can, assisting seniors with college and financial aid applications. They maintain a supply of clothing and footwear for kids in need. Stone-Palmquist reports one student who

missed school on a snowy day because the only footwear available where she was staying was a pair of flip-flops.

In this issue of Groundcover, we take a broad look at housing insecurity among youth in their teens and early twenties, the services available to them, where they hang out and how they cope. High school and college students contributed nearly half of this month's Groundcover stories. We are grateful to them for sharing their perspectives and very impressed with the quality of their writing.

Ozone House fosters a variety of skills in teens

continued from page 6

opportunity to engage in yoga and to practice and perform music and spoken word poetry.

The evening meal preparation doubles as culinary arts instruction as part of the Food Gatherers Community Kitchen training and placement

program. Having just lost a major grant, many of these services will be curtailed at the start of 2012. They will continue the evening meal and focus on delivering services and employment training. Local teens will have to find a new safe space to go to after school.

Ozone House relies on volunteers for

some critical functions. Volunteers staff the crisis hotline, after completing a 40-hour training. Each volunteer typically works one 3-4 hour shift per week. Volunteers also staff events, stuff envelopes, make monetary and gift donations and satisfy other requests found at the Ozone House website wish list.

CRYPTOQUOTE

Solution

"I'll never stop dreaming that one day we can be a real family, together, all of us laughing and talking, loving and understanding, not looking at the past but only to the future."

— LaToya Jackson

S	A	N	T		T	U	B	A		C	A	R	O	M
C	L	U	E		O	R	A	L		A	M	O	L	E
A	S	T	A		N	A	S	A		R	I	S	E	N
L	E	T	S	K	I	S	S			F	O	R	Y	O
P	A	Y	E	E		T	E	N	O	N				
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D	O	E		N	O	R			L	O	V	E	B	U
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M	A	R	R	Y	M	E			T	C	C		S	O
I	R	O	N		E	Y	E	W	E	A	R			
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B	E	G	O	O	D			H	E	A	T	W	A	V
A	R	N	A	Z			C	O	T	S		E	L	A
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3	1	5	4	2	9	8	6	7
4	6	7	3	1	8	9	2	5
2	8	9	7	5	6	1	4	3
6	9	1	2	8	3	5	7	4
5	7	2	1	9	4	3	8	6
8	3	4	6	7	5	2	9	1
1	2	8	5	4	7	6	3	9
7	5	3	9	6	2	4	1	8
9	4	6	8	3	1	7	5	2

"It Gets Better" concert tackles issue of LGBT bullying

by Ellington Berg
Groundcover Contributor

Last month, the U-M Musical Theatre students presented the IT GETS BETTER PROJECT concert to raise awareness of bullying in the LGBT community. As the night went on, though, it became clear that this concert's purpose was not just to raise awareness, but to celebrate everyone for being who they are. With this mission in mind, the concert accomplished this goal masterfully.

The IT GETS BETTER PROJECT is a nationwide movement initiated by The Trevor Project to raise awareness on the dangers of bullying. Although the Trevor Project's most direct outlets are the Youtube videos mainly directed towards the LGBTQ youth of America, it also helps the community in many other ways: The Trevor Project offers many different ways of communication to at risk youth, such as suicide help lines and chat rooms that offer

support. The Trevor Project also offers a Lifeguard Workshop Program, where trained facilitators address topics directly related to "sexual orientation and gender identity, the impacts of language and behavior on LGBTQ youth and suicide prevention skills in schools." For more information on The Trevor Project, visit: www.thetrevorproject.org

The moment the concert fell into place was quite unexpected, though. It happened when a girl was singing the Corinne Bailey Rae hit, "Put Your Records On." She came to that part in the song where Ms. Bailey Rae celebrates having an afro. Now, visually, the singer did not look genetically capable of growing an afro. And then, instantly, connections were drawn and this message of love was spread. The performance of the song wasn't about having an afro; it was about the beauty of being able to do something unique. Moreover, the love of being unique and having something else that is yours

and that no one can take away from you. It was this message of integrity that suddenly gave weight to this performance and the entire concert.

Interspersed between songs were the famous "It Gets Better" videos that have gone viral over the internet over the past year. Even though the majority of the audience had seen these videos; they were presented in a different atmosphere. Here, the words connected to the song that had just been performed, which gave the videos an extra depth of emotion. Then came a surprise – the U-M students had their own It Gets Better video. The originality of this video met with the familiarity of the other videos and moved the audience to its core.

What was most impressive, however,

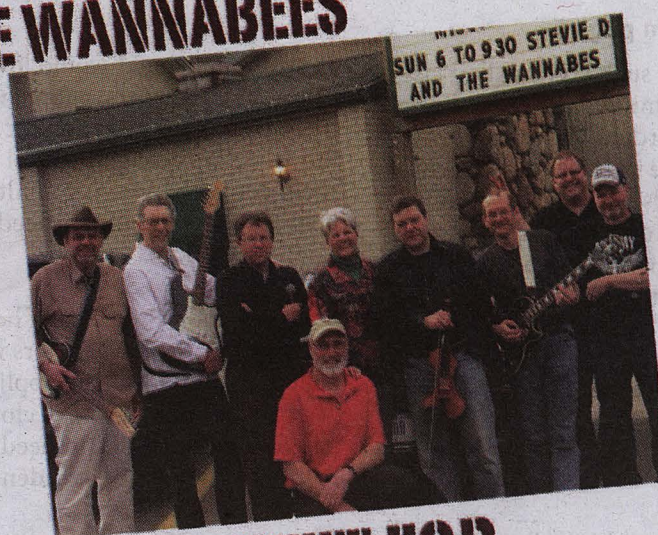
was the musical theatre students' adept performance skills. Using songs from the contemporary pop canon doesn't really sound riveting, at first. These songs were written for different reasons than their poetry and lyricism, for the most part. Yet each student gave them a poetic depth within their own performance, transforming songs that meant one thing into another. These new meanings all found their way into the cohesive blending of love within the IT GETS BETTER PROJECT concert.

So, congratulations to Han Park and company for creating an atmosphere that inspired so much love. I only wish that every at-risk youth could have seen this, so that they would hear the same words they've been hearing for the past year. It gets better when you have integrity.



"It Gets Better" concert organizer Han Park sits in at the piano at the Kerrytown performance

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